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Good morning. I am Sandra Elliott, director of Aging and Senior Services Development at Meridian Health, a non-profit hospital based health care provider serving Central New Jersey. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to speak today.

We are here to ask the federal government to support more meaningful pilot projects that independently evaluate alternative technologies to meet the diverse and increasingly complicated needs of seniors and their caregivers now and in the future.

I would like to introduce you to Ginger Weber of Middletown, New Jersey. Her mother, Nancy, is 87 years old, has mild Alzheimer's disease and still lives alone. Together with her husband and four sons, Ginger has been struggling, like so many other American families, with how to provide her mom with the best quality of life, ensure her safety, and keep her out of an Assisted Living or Nursing Home Facility. Obviously a challenge given Nancy's circumstance.

The most difficult question was if and when it would be no longer safe for their mom to live alone. They enrolled in Meridian's Quiet Care pilot program, which uses motion detectors and computer software to track activities of daily living. By using this technology, Ginger and her family are able to get an up-to-the-minute status of their mom's daily activities through e-mails and text messages to their cell phones. For example, they know if she has remembered to take her medications and eat her meals. In addition, the technology will alert them to potential problems instantly via their cell phone. They share the information with Nancy's physician who adjusts her care plan based on the data.

Through the Quiet Care program, Ginger and her family feel more confident they will have the information they need to make the emotional decision to relocate Nancy to an assisted living environment.

Additional pilot program participants include:

A 91 year old senior fell in her apartment but wouldn't push her Lifeline button because her daughter was going out of town the next day and she didn't want to upset her. She laid on the floor for a number of hours until the daughter came over to check on her because she wouldn't answer the phone. With our pilot program in place, the daughter has a tool she can use to check on her mother's safety.

And finally, a 82 year old diabetic's son tried to phone his mother one morning several times without success. When he checked on her, she was in diabetic coma. His mother had to be hospitalized. Her son wanted to participate in the pilot program to make sure his mother was taking her medication and preparing meals – keeping her safe and avoiding any unnecessary hospital stays – a goal that I am sure is shared by all in this room.

These stories are clear examples of how the power of our nation's advanced technology can and should be harnessed and developed for the benefit of our aging population. Their stories reflect not only 'Senior America' – but all of America. The need for developing and

applying new home-based technologies to enhance the care, support, and quality of life of our seniors and caregivers is not a question of ‘if’ but ‘*how*’ – *how* America responds to our population living longer and its impact on our Medicare and Medicaid dollars.

Unfortunately, Federal organizations like the National Institute of Aging and the Agency for Healthcare Research Quality have not apparently funded similar technology-based programs such as our Quiet Care pilot program – which has the potential to save billions of dollars while enabling a better life for millions. In New Jersey alone, the Medicaid annual cost for a person in assisted living is \$30,000 and \$60,000 for nursing home care.

We are not suggesting handouts or subsidizing lofty ideas that do not have grounding in the real world – but projects that test realistic applications that strongly suggest an ability to preserve precious health care dollars for the future.

At Meridian Health, we have recognized this issue early-on and have worked to identify, test, and develop new innovative technology

models at the local level to prepare us in meeting our health care mission now and in the years to come.

We don't have the luxury of waiting for these advances to come to us.

We are facing a critical need now – so we are seeking alternatives now. Our nursing homes are full, our assisted living communities are full, our emergency rooms are full, and our hospitals facilities are not structured to manage the number of patients that will hit our doors if we don't do something now to better care for our aging population.

Our service area, Monmouth and Ocean County, is quickly becoming a highly desirable retirement destination. We are currently home to the largest percent of 65 years and older population in metropolitan sized counties in the 4 state region – a number which is compounded by the rapid development of Active Mature Adult Communities for the 55+ population which currently represent 92 communities and 63,000 homes. Our senior population is expected to grow by over 10% in the next 4 years, and our super seniors, the 85 and older population, is projected to increase over 16%.

We appreciate and understand the greater need to focus our attention on the care alternatives inside the home.

Meridian hears firsthand what seniors and caregivers want and need:

Seniors want:

- to maintain their independence.
- to feel safe in their home.
- to not be a burden to their families.

Caregivers worry about:

- the senior's safety and care in the home.
- whether they will have any time to enjoy retirement or if it will be spent taking care of their parents.
- if mom or dad are taking their medications.

They can't understand how we can put men into space – but can't seem to help mom remember to take her medication.

Today's seniors want to stay in their home. Tomorrow's seniors will demand it.

Meridian Health is proud to be proactive in identifying and testing new technologies that will help our current seniors age gracefully and respectfully. But we can't do it alone. We need your help. Thank you.